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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 001076

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2027
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PA](#)
SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY OVER COLORADO PARTY PRIMARY CONTINUES

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs a.i. Bruce Kleiner; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Pre-candidate Luis Castiglioni won the Colorado Party re-vote of one Asuncion polling station December 30. The re-vote was held because the December 16 Colorado Party primary at this location was marred by fraud and violence. Despite a strong police presence, there were further incidents of alleged fraud and violence between the supporters of Castiglioni and "oficialista" candidate Blanca Ovelar, President Duarte's chosen successor, December 30. In the run-up to the December 30 vote, both sides campaigned door-to-door, with Ovelar reportedly handing out Christmas fruitcakes and cash.

12. (C) Despite reports that Castiglioni won the December 30 re-vote, the Colorado Party nomination will remain formally undecided until January 10. Ovelar claims to be winning by 32,000 votes with nine interior departments counted; Castiglioni remains confident that he won. Castiglioni insiders, however, worry about Ovelar supporters falsifying local electoral results and buying off the party's electoral tribunal. Castiglioni supporters have publicly expressed disappointment that the head of the Colorado electoral tribunal, Oscar La Torre, has described the process to date as "transparent" given their contention that some results were based on falsified documents. They have called for La Torre's resignation.

13. (C) COMMENT: President Duarte and Blanca Ovelar appear to be surprised that Castiglioni is running such a close race. Duarte made another jab at Castiglioni (and us) in a transcribed interview in third-in-circulation, business-oriented "La Nacion" published December 30. Duarte said Castiglioni is supported by "the press, Ambassador Cason and USG money;" he also described Castiglioni as "submissive" to "U.S. imperialism." However, most of Duarte's claims have failed to resonate. We will continue to keep a low profile through January 10, when the Colorado Party electoral tribunal announces its formal tally. END COMMENT.

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